Remarks

35 USC § 101

Claim 1 has been amended to more specifically link the method stages to the ingress entity which is carrying out the method. Applicant therefore submits that Claims 1-9, 11-17 and 46 to 47 comply with the requirements of 35 USC § 101.

Claims 36 and 37 have been amended to clarify that the computer program product is "embodied on a machine readable storage medium". Page 5 lines 28 to 32 provides examples of machine-readable storage media which include "an electronic memory device, hard disk, [and] optical disk" and all comprise statutory subject-matter. Applicant therefore submits that Claims 36 and 37 comply with the requirements of 35 USC § 101

35 USC § 103

Claim 1 recites, in particular:

"A method of operating an ingress entity of a packet-based network, comprising:
receiving a stream of voice data;
passing the voice data through a processing stage;
sending processed voice data across the packet network;
detecting whether the received stream of voice data contains tandem free operation (TFO) information and, if TFO information is present, removing TFO information from the stream of voice data before passing the voice data through the processing stage, sending the TFO information across the packet network without passing it through the processing stage; further including controlling the step of removing TFO information from the stream of voice data to ensure that the TFO information does not leak through to voice data,
the processing stage including one of the group comprising applying data compression to the voice data, applying echo cancellation to the voice data, applying G.711 log-law coding to the voice data, applying silence suppression to the voice data and applying DTMF digit relay to the voice data."

10

The Examiner has maintained his rejection of Claim 1 as being obvious over Dropmmann et al in view of Koistinen. Applicant respectfully disagrees.

The Examiner in the section entitled "Response to Arguments" indicates that he believes that the stages of "separation of voice data and in-band TFO signalling and sending the voice data as a packet" comprise a processing stage.

Applicant notes that in Claim 1 the processing stage is defined as "including one of the group comprising applying data compression to the voice data, applying echo cancellation to the voice data, applying G.711 log-law coding to the voice data, applying silence suppression to the voice data and applying DTMF digit relay to the voice data". This appears to be accepted by the Examiner in paragraph 7 of the Office Action which states that it is related to elements common to any voice processing stage rather than indicating where it is disclosed in Dropman et al as not being disclosed by Dropman et al.

Thus, Dropman does not disclose the step of "passing the voice data through a processing stage" where the processing stage includes "one of the group comprising applying data compression to the voice data, applying echo cancellation to the voice data, applying G.711 log-law coding to the voice data, applying silence suppression to the voice data and applying DTMF digit relay to the voice data".

With reference now to Koistinen, the Examiner indicates in paragraph 6 of the Office Action that Koistinen discloses a processing stage in Column 4 lines 43 to 46 which states "means for extracting certain information from the received packet data which information comprises coded data an tandem free operation signalling information related to the coding". Applicant notes that the portion of Koistinen cited by the Examiner relates to an apparatus for the removal of TFO voice data from packet data the apparatus including "means for receiving data in a packet format" (column 4 line 25).

Applicant suspects the Examiner may have meant to quote column 4 lines 7 to 12 or the equivalent.

In any event, Applicant notes that Claim 1 defines the processing stage as "including one of the group comprising applying data compression to the voice data, applying echo

cancellation to the voice data, applying G.711 log-law coding to the voice data, applying silence suppression to the voice data and applying DTMF digit relay to the voice data". Nowhere does Koistinen disclose or even suggest such a processing stage when placing voice data into packets.

Thus, neither Dropman nor Koistinen disclose the steps of removing TFO information from the stream of voice data before passing the voice data through the processing stage where the processing stage includes one of the group comprising applying data compression to the voice data, applying echo cancellation to the voice data, applying G.711 log-law coding to the voice data, applying silence suppression to the voice data and applying DTMF digit relay to the voice data.

The Examiner in paragraph 7 of the Office Action states that the limitation of " the processing stage including one of the group comprising applying data compression to the voice data, applying echo cancellation to the voice data, applying G.711 log-law coding to the voice data, applying silence suppression to the voice data and applying DTMF digit relay to the voice data" is related to elements common to any voice processing stage and cannot be distinguished over the cited prior arts or any other relevant prior art in telephony.

Claim 1 claims a method including the step of "passing the voice data through a processing stage". It is clear from Claim 1 that it is only voice data which is passed through the processing stage as the method includes the step of "if TFO information is present [in the received voice data], removing TFO information from the stream of voice data before passing the voice data through the processing stage, sending the TFO information across the packet network without passing it through the processing stage". The processing stage including one of the group comprising applying data compression to the voice data, applying echo cancellation to the voice data, applying G.711 log-law coding to the voice data, applying silence suppression to the voice data and applying DTMF digit relay to the voice data."

Thus voice data received with TFO data in it is processed to reduce the number of bits used to transmit it across the network and therefore decrease the amount of bandwidth required.

As discussed in the specification as filed voice data including TFO information is not processed only packetized to ensure that TFO information is not corrupted. This is

consistent with the disclosures of Dropman and Koistinen which only disclose packetizing voice data, potentially including the TFO information, and not performing any other processing steps on the voice data to further reduce the bandwidth required to transmit the data.

Applicant therefore submits that it would not have been obvious to one skilled in the art to implement the invention as claimed in Claim 1.
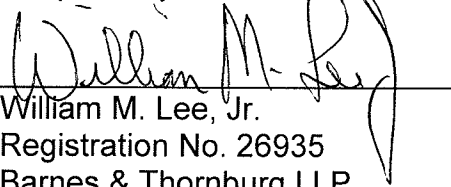
Applicant therefore submits that Claim 1 would not have been obvious over Dropmann in view of Koistinen.

The above comments also apply to the subject matter of the other independent claims, which are therefore submitted to be allowable, as well. As the remaining claims depend from the independent claims, those claims are submitted to be allowable at least by virtue of their dependencies.

As this response is being submitted during the fourth month following the Examiner's Office Action, an appropriate Petition for Extension of Time is also submitted herewith.

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